

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A

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SUBJECT: ARE THAI-CAMBODIAN TALKS IN THE OFFING?

REF: BANGKOK 15086

1. CAMBODIA APPEARS TO BE INCHING ITS WAY TO HOLDING SUBSTANTIVE TALKS WITH THAILAND. SINCE THE JULY 25 MEETING BETWEEN MINOR OFFICIALS OF THE TWO COUNTRIES ON THE CAMBODIAN SIDE OF THE FRONTIER NEAR ARANYAPRATHET (REF A), THERE HAVE BEEN FURTHER SIGNALS LEADING TO THIS CONCLUSION.

2. FIRST, PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOT STATED JULY 27 THAT HE WAS READY TO MEET KHMER LEADERS IN EITHER BANGKOK OR PHNOM PENH AND OFFERED AID IN THE FORM OF FOOD AND CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS. AT ALMOST THE SAME TIME, RADIO PHNOM PENH BEGAN ITS NEWS BROADCAST WITH A STATEMENT THAT THERE IS NOW "THE BEST ATMOSPHERE EVER FOR PROSPECTS FOR GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN CAMBODIA AND THAILAND." IT WELCOMED

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AN EXPRESSION OF HOPE FOR GOOD RELATIONS THAT

KHUKRIT HAD MADE EARLIER IN THE PHILIPPINES, DECLARING THAT CAMBODIAN POLICY IS TO HAVE SUCH RELATIONS WITH ALL FRIENDLY COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY NEIGHBORING ONES. THIS BROADCAST SENT THAI HOPES SOARING.

3. ON AUGUST 2 A CAMBODIAN BORDER OFFICIAL REPORTEDLY SAID THAT DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER KHIEU SAMPHAN HOPES TO MEET RTG FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN SOON IN BANGKOK AND THAT GRUNK BADLY NEEDS PETROLEUM, WHICH IT WOULD LIKE TO PURCHASE FROM THAILAND. ON THE FOLLOWING DAY CHATCHAI SAID THIS WAS GOOD NEWS AND HE WOULD GLADLY MEET THE CAMBODIANS AT EITHER CAPITAL OR AT THE BORDER. HE ADDED THAT THAILAND WOULD LIKE TO HELP CAMBODIA WITH SUCH ITEMS AS FOOD AND FUEL.

4. FINALLY, THE DISTRICT OFFICER AT ARANYAPRATHET, CHEMNONG U-PO, TOLD THE PRESS OF HIS CONTACT AUGUST 6 WITH A CAMBODIAN REPRESENTATIVE (PROBABLY HAK SRENG, THE SAME ONE WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE JULY 25 ENCOUNTER), ON THE LATTER'S INITIATIVE. THE CAMBODIAN SHOWED HIM A DOCUMENT FROM GRUNK FOREIGN MINISTER SARIN CHHAK EXPRESSING THE DESIRE TO HOLD TALKS WITH THAI OFFICIALS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AT POIPET, ON THE SUBJECT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. BOTH SIDES ARE SAID TO HAVE AGREED THAT A MEETING WILL BE HELD ON A MINISTERIAL LEVEL. IN BANGKOK, WINYU ANGKHANARAK, DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERIOR, CONFIRMED THAT TALKS WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE SAME LOCATION AUGUST 10 TO DISCUSS A POSSIBLE AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING.

5. COMMENT. CAMBODIA MAY BE FINDING THAT IT IS OBLIGED TO EMERGE FROM ITS SHELL AND TALK TO ITS RICHER NEIGHBOR TO THE WEST, PARTICULARLY TO OBTAIN FUEL WHICH REFUGEES TELL US IS IN SHORT SUPPLY. THE USE OF SARIN CHHAK'S NAME, IF TRUE, WOULD APPEAR TO INDICATE THAT HE IS TIED IN TO THE PHNOM PENH AUTHORITY RATHER THAN JUST TO GRUNK'S PEKING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BRANCH, AND TO APPEASE THE THAI FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS SEEKING MORE THAN SMALL SIGNALS FROM UNKNOWN CAMBODIANS AT POIEP AS A BASIS ON WHIHH TO HOLD DISCUSSIONS. WHETHER ALL OF THIS WILL CULMINATE IN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, AS THE THAI VERY MUCH HOPE, IS ANYONE'S GUESS.
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